

# SB 837 (STEINBERG)

## Kindergarten Readiness Act

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### SUMMARY

**Senate Bill 837**, the Kindergarten Readiness Act, makes one year of voluntary, high quality transitional kindergarten available to every 4 year old in California, so that all children are ready for success in school.

### BACKGROUND

A powerful body of research shows that investing in early education is highly effective in increasing high school graduation and college attendance, decreasing crime, and building a stronger economy and middle class. That is why there is overwhelming public support for increasing investments in pre-k.

Promising new reforms such as the Common Core State Standards and the Local Control Funding Formula establish greater equity and quality in California's public K-12 education system. However, neither of these reforms addresses the reality that the achievement gap is formed well before children arrive in kindergarten.

Recent Stanford research shows that by age 2, low-income children are six months behind in language development relative to their higher income peers. By age 5, low-income children are more than two years behind in language development.

In California, too many children miss out on a critical developmental window of

opportunity. Only half of California low-income preschool-aged children are served in State Preschool or Head Start, and only one-quarter of all children are eligible for the current transitional kindergarten program.

Children who do not read proficiently by the end of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade are four times more likely to not graduate from high school on time. Too few California children are on track to read well by this all-important milestone; just 48% of 3<sup>rd</sup> graders test proficient or better in English-language arts. The costs of attempted remediation, in the form of repeated grade-levels, special education placements and other interventions, are high.

Longitudinal studies show that every dollar invested in high-quality early education programs generates \$7 or more in returns. Savings come in the form of lower grade retention, lower crime rates, and higher lifetime earnings.

If California were to invest in high quality transitional kindergarten for all, the savings in the prison system alone are estimated to be \$1.1 billion a year due to the reduction in prison population by 13,000 prisoners.

Now is the time to make a wise investment in transitional kindergarten for all.

## **THIS BILL**

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### **SB 837 will:**

- Provide all 4 year olds with high-quality, developmentally appropriate transitional kindergarten (TK).
- Combine the best quality standards from current TK and State Preschool, creating a model that results in sustainable gains in school performance.
- Be funded through Average Daily Attendance (ADA), with additional resources provided for low-income, English learner and foster children.
- Allow for a mixed delivery system, in which school districts and charter schools may contract with private TK providers who meet quality standards.
- Allow existing federal and state preschool funds to be focused on additional early care and education programs for low-income 3- and 4-year olds, giving them an added boost when they need it most.
- Not take any funds away from existing state-contracted child development providers.
- Reduce the average cost per child of current TK by creating a two-session model.
- Phase in over five years, starting in 2015-2016, to allow ample time to expand services to all children whose parents wish to enroll them.

## **SUPPORT**

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Early Edge California (sponsor)  
State Superintendent of Public Instruction  
Tom Torlakson (co-sponsor)

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

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